

QUEEN ELIZABETH II
1926 – 2022



The Telegraph





Our Queen

Allison Pearson pays tribute to the extraordinary life and reign of Elizabeth II, encompassing

SHE WAS ALWAYS THERE. For most of us she has never not been there. Part of the scenery, a fixture in the firmament, certain as the sun rising in the east. Our Queen. Changing with the times, ever just the same. There are no soldiers left who swore an oath of loyalty to a king. Six of her 15 prime ministers were born after her accession. The longest-reigning monarch. The face that launched a billion bank notes, the stamp on every letter, the silhouette of the national self. Our Queen. Did we come to believe she was immortal? (Maybe, but only because the alternative was unthinkable.) We can't quite imagine life without her. To be honest, we aren't absolutely certain who we are without her. For the best part of a century, if anyone asked, 'What kind of country is this?' there was no need to search for an answer, for there she was. Our Queen.

The death of a very old lady is hardly unexpected and yet millions of us will be experiencing profound shock and a strange, unsettling sorrow. Men, women and children on the way to work or school, sitting on a bus, buying a coffee, just talking to a friend on the phone, may find themselves surprised by tears. There will be a need to congregate, to sign books of condolence, to bear witness, to pay respects, to share the loss. This is what history feels like. We are living through one of its great, heart-stopping caesuras as a creamy vellum page is turned. None of us will ever forget where we were when we heard the news.



Queen

war, coronation, love, death, corgis and, above all else, an unwavering devotion to duty

COVER: LICHFIELD ARCHIVE/CAMERA PRESS, P2-3: JULIAN CALDER/CAMERA PRESS, THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

In the grave, beautiful words of the Clerk of the Privy Council, 'It has pleased Almighty God to call to His Mercy our late Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth II of blessed and glorious memory.'

Liz Truss, only appointed Prime Minister last week by the Queen (and with such a lovely smile), was among the first to be told of Her Majesty's death, was alerted by the code 'London Bridge is down'. That feels about right, doesn't it? An iconic feature of the British landscape has gone for good and now we are left to mourn, but also to marvel at the unspoken bond between a sovereign and her subjects. Since we were small, we were taught to ask God to save her, to make her happy and glorious and long to reign over us. That prayer was answered. Answered so well, in fact, that for nigh on seven decades she could be taken entirely for granted. Her record-breaking reign was both a time of unprecedented change and remarkable stability. That security, the underlying sense that all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well, was her greatest gift to us. Only now that her reign is over can we fully appreciate our good fortune.

The Queen's life story has acquired the archetypal force of fairy tale. There was flighty Uncle David, the weak, vain King Edward VIII, who fell under the spell of wicked witch Wallis Simpson, allowing the country to be rescued by the good princess. Elizabeth was 10 years and eight months old when she found out that her life

would not be her own. Thanks to the abdication, and barring her parents producing a male heir, she knew that, one day, she would be Queen. Her maternal grandmother swore that, every night, Lilibet knelt by her bed and prayed for a baby brother, but never again did she give any sign that the role daunted or scared her. Destiny's child had 'an air of authority and reflectiveness astonishing in an infant', according to Winston Churchill, who would become the first of her 15 prime ministers.

On her 21st birthday, in April 1947, Princess Elizabeth made a broadcast to the British Commonwealth and Empire that was to define everything that followed. 'It is very simple,' she said, 'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.' At more than 70 years' distance, the clipped voice, fluting with nerves, sounds impossibly posh – she says 'thank you' and 'heppy'. No one talks like that any more. What endures, and I find it hard to hear it without crying, is the commitment to duty. In her clear-eyed candour, she was more like a novitiate nun renouncing the vanity of the world to pursue a vocation. We have grown accustomed to the promises of politicians, which are written in hot air, but this one was for keeps.

How lucky we were. The monarchy, which has thrown up some prize popinjays and prats down the

On the cover: Queen Elizabeth II in her coach on her way to the State Opening of Parliament in 1971. Previous page: at Balmoral in 2010. This page: in July 2021



Choosing a penniless, tricky foreigner was the Queen's single act of rebellion – but even that turned out to be a sensible move

↑
20 November 1972: celebrating the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh's silver wedding anniversary

centuries, gave these isles in those exhausted postwar years an enchantingly serious, lovely young woman who became a symbol of the hope that the country had fought for. It mattered a good deal for the stature of our future Queen, trained to change spark plugs in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, that she had lived through what she called the 'terrible and glorious years of the Second World War'. It only added lustre to the myth that, on VE Day, an incognito princess was carried on a wave of euphoria to Trafalgar Square. Like Cinderella in reverse, at the end of the night she had to put away normal clothes and return to the Palace.

Every fairy tale needs its handsome prince. When it came to finding a husband, though, Elizabeth could echo Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*: 'In terms of choice I am not solely led/By nice direction of a maiden's eyes/Besides, the lottery of my destiny/Bars me the right of voluntary choosing.' Except Lilibet was 13 when she first saw a blond naval cadet who looked like a god who had

just strolled down off Mount Olympus. And nice direction of a rather determined maiden's eye ended in a love match with Prince Philip.

In a long and disciplined life, choosing a penniless, tricky foreigner was the Queen's single act of rebellion, but even that turned out to be a sensible move. Her husband became a crucial part of her success; his certainty boosted her confidence, his impatience modernised a calcified Court, his presence made the person in the loneliest job in the world less alone. Plus, the Queen could remain beyond reproach while it was the Duke of Edinburgh making all those 'gaffes' and providing covering fire for her. 'Quite simply, my strength and stay all these years,' she said of him on their golden wedding anniversary in 1997. Some of the happiest photos are of her bursting out laughing at something the Duke just said that he shouldn't have.

As newlyweds in Malta, Philip pursued his naval career and Elizabeth enjoyed playing house. With the birth of Charles, a son and heir, in 1948, life looked good



←

With the corgis in 1974 – the Queen owned more than 30 during her reign

and was made even better when they completed a pigeon pair two years later with their daughter, Anne. But the lease on normality was short.

On Tuesday 2 June 1953, Elizabeth was crowned Queen. Over half the population watched the Coronation on television, a spellbinding novelty that showed Britons their new monarch in her ceremonial finery. The Crown looked too weighty on that girlish head, but she had practised walking in it and the robes that were heavier than a marine's full kit for hour after hour, up and down the throne room in Buckingham Palace, until she had the ceremony by heart. It helped that she was young and that she and her people would grow and learn together. The awe was tempered by protectiveness. It was raining – of course it was raining – but nothing could dampen the enthusiasm of the crowds for what the sociologist Michael Young called 'an act of national communion... one family knit together with another in one great national family through identification with monarchy'.

The Queen's subjects in Papua New Guinea put it more concisely: 'Mama belong big family.'

It mattered, too, that she was a woman. Although the Queen would never have thought of herself as a feminist, her success as a wise, steady counsel to 14 prime ministers was the greatest possible subliminal advert for female power. In a newspaper column of 1952, one writer argued that, 'If, as many earnestly pray, the accession of Elizabeth II can help to remove the last shreds of prejudice against women aspiring to the highest places, then a new era for women will indeed be at hand.' It must have worked. The columnist's name was Margaret Thatcher.

Those are the facts of the Queen's early life. We can all, to some extent, recite the highs and the lows of the years that followed. The first scandal was Princess Margaret being denied permission to marry a divorcee (a bitter irony since three of the monarch's four children ended up divorced, a source of immense pain to such a devout Christian). But the Queen herself had exceptional

steadiness of character and rarely put a foot wrong. The errors of seven decades in the limelight you can count on one hand. Astonishing, really.

Undoubtedly, the closest she came to disaster was in 1997 when she stayed at Balmoral after the death of Princess Diana, not understanding that she needed to provide a focal point for public grief. The reticence and strict adherence to protocol that had served her so well were a handicap in this new blurry, more emotional age. 'Show us you care,' demanded the *Express*. For a few days, republicanism crackled like static in the London air until the Queen came home to the Palace and made a broadcast to the nation. In her uniform of mourning – black dress with pearls and wonderful diamond brooch – she spoke of the overwhelming expressions of sadness. 'So, what I say to you now, as your Queen, and as a grandmother, I say from my heart,' she said. The speech was touching enough to appease the vast, restless crowd you could glimpse through the window behind her, but that 'as your Queen' had a reproving glint of steel. Elizabeth had never stooped to conquer, and she never would.

Whenever her people felt let down, she made cautious adjustments while cleaving to Elizabeth I's motto, *semper*

eadem – always the same, which doesn't mean dull, though some accused her of that. Brenda was *Private Eye's* nickname for her. They weren't the only ones to mock or patronise. 'Duchesses find the Queen dowdy, frumpish and banal,' one snobby critic opined.

Perhaps they did. But she suited the rest of us down to the ground. The British mistrust intellectuals and show-offs. If Her Majesty started the day with the *Racing Post* (and *The Daily Telegraph*) and preferred horses and dogs to humans, then that endeared her to a nation of animal lovers. The 30 corgis she kept throughout her life (starting with Susan, who came on honeymoon, obviously) became a royal trademark. We liked that she was frugal, with a hopeless two-bar electric fire valiantly attempting to defrost the room where she received guests at Buckingham Palace.

If she mainly stuck to cheerful block colours for public appearances, that was because being visible to her people was more important than style. Besides, if the Queen wasn't *à la mode*, it meant she never went out of fashion. While glitzier monarchies fell into disrepute, our Tupperware model went from strength to strength. By subtle deployment of the three Ds – duty, decency, diligence – she silenced the republican cause for as long as she lived.



14 May 2012: in south London during the Diamond Jubilee tour



The Queen and the Duke, Windsor Castle, April 2014





'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service'

Even those who despised the monarchical system couldn't help but admire the Queen.

Did we really know her? I don't think we did, but that's rather the point. Elizabeth II was the most photographed woman in history, but she remained an enigma until the end, and this was key to her success. Our Queen. As she got older, we loved her more. What we may once have perceived as coldness became a priceless inability to fake emotion. While others debased their standards in pursuit of celebrity, the Queen held back. We never envied other countries with their passing parade of presidents because we knew that we had her, the incorruptible, the most loyal, the best. Our Queen.

During her long reign, the United Kingdom may have moved from instinctive deference to raucous scepticism, from imperial giant to service provider, but the Queen continued to believe in us. In her broadcasts, she urged upon us 'all those individual instances of kindness and respect' and brought us back, quietly but insistently, to the Christian faith that sustained her.

'It is very simple,' she said all those years ago, 'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.' But it wasn't simple, was it? Turning yourself into a living symbol isn't

simple. A young woman vowing to repress every selfish impulse, tread down all unruly feelings and dedicate herself to an abstract ideal of nationhood on behalf of millions of people isn't simple. But she did it. Our Queen.

Alas, she isn't here today, in black dress, pearls, and that wonderful diamond brooch, to explain to us how to deal with the unfathomable void that her death leaves. But, if we look back at the address she gave to the nation after her mother died, I reckon we get a strong sense of how she would want us to be: 'At the ceremony tomorrow, I hope that sadness will blend with a wider sense of thanksgiving, not just for her life but for the times in which she lived – a century for this country and the Commonwealth not without its trials and sorrows, but also one of extraordinary progress, full of examples of courage and service as well as fun and laughter... I thank you from my heart for the love you gave her during her life and the honour you now give her in death. May God bless you all.'

Close your eyes and you will always see her, stepping out of a car, gloved hand extended, accepting a posy from a child, a smile that lit up that Hanoverian face, handbag in the crook of her arm, placing one court shoe in front of the other, keeping her promise to serve until her last breath. Our Queen.

1920s

→
The then Duke and
Duchess of York with
their daughter
Princess Elizabeth
Alexandra Mary in
the Royal family
christening robe, 1926



‘A character. She has an air
of authority and reflectiveness
astonishing in an infant’

Winston Churchill



◀ Far left
21 December 1929: at
King's Cross station en
route to Sandringham



◀
With her maternal
grandmother,
Lady Strathmore, 1927



◀
Perfecting the
royal wave, 1928



↑
At Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh, 5 July 1937, with her mother and younger sister, Princess Margaret

→
Princess Elizabeth at the Little House in the grounds of Windsor's Royal Lodge where she – and generations of royal children – played



↑
21 April 1939: riding in Windsor Great Park on her 13th birthday

↖
A trip to London Zoo in 1938

↖ Far left
Playing with the corgis at home at 145 Piccadilly, London, July 1936

1942



↑ Top left
Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret in Buckingham Palace, 1942

↑
In the grounds at Windsor Castle, 8 July 1942



1940s

◀
King George VI with
Princess Elizabeth
at Windsor Castle,
11 April 1942



↑
Princess Elizabeth
in 1942



←
In officer's uniform with an Auxiliary Territorial Service first aid truck in 1945

→
28 February 1947: playing tag on board *HMS Vanguard* during a royal tour

World War II

The Queen was the only female member of the Royal family to serve in the Second World War. At 18, the heir to the throne joined the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service and trained in London as a mechanic and military truck driver.



←
10 October 1940: Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth (then aged 14) made a radio broadcast to the children of the Empire





←
Princess Elizabeth with Queen Elizabeth, Winston Churchill, George VI and Princess Margaret on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, VE Day



←
Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on their wedding day

→ Far right
Just married:
a portrait of the bride



The royal wedding

At 11.30am on 20 November 1947 – just four months after their engagement was officially announced on 9 July – Princess Elizabeth of York married Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten (born Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark) at Westminster Abbey in front of 2,000 guests.



Official photograph featuring bridesmaids, page boys and royal guests – but without the wedding bouquet, which had been misplaced





100



→

Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh with Prince Charles and Princess Anne in 1951 – this is the first colour photograph of Princess Anne



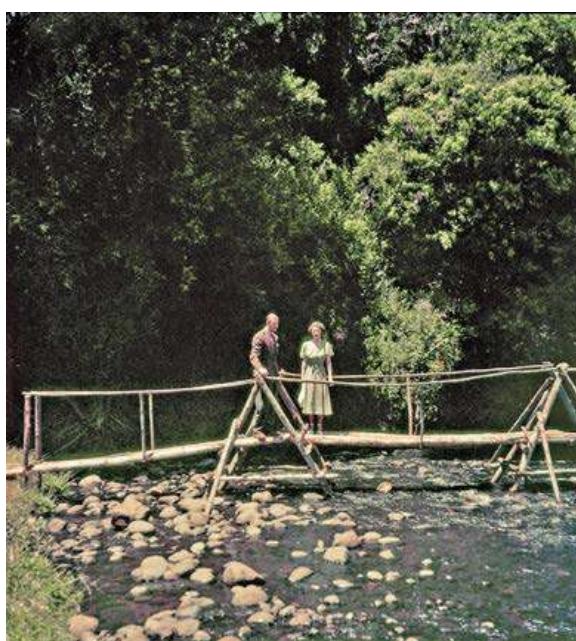
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

→
Trooping the Colour,
7 June 1951



→
9 February 1952:
arriving at London
Airport following the
death of her father,
she is met by Anthony
Eden, Clement Attlee
and Winston Churchill

→
At Sagana Lodge in
Kenya in February
1952, just days
before the King's death



‘If her accession helps to remove
the last shreds of prejudice, a new
era for women will be at hand’

Margaret Thatcher, writing in 1952

1950s



QUEEN ELIZABETH II



2 June 1953:
the newly crowned
Queen Elizabeth II
waves to the crowds



Arriving at
Westminster Abbey for
her Coronation



Far right
Queen Elizabeth II on
her Coronation day



1950s



QUEEN ELIZABETH II



Meeting Marilyn Monroe at the Royal Film Performance, October 1956



GETTY IMAGES, BETTMANN/CORBIS, REX SHUTTERSTOCK, CECIL BEATON/CAMERA PRESS

1950s

←

With Winston Churchill
on 4 April 1955, the day
before his retirement

→

In St John's,
Newfoundland, in
June 1959, during a
royal tour of Canada
and North America



गोप्य



→

Riding on an elephant
during a royal tour
of Nepal in 1961



→
4 November 1960,
Oxford: visiting
Prime Minister
Harold Macmillan,
the Chancellor
of Oxford University

→ Far right
29 October 1966,
Aberfan: the Queen
and the Duke of
Edinburgh with locals in
the Welsh village, eight
days after the disaster
that killed 144 people

↓ Below
15 June 1961: the
Queen and the Duke
hold a banquet at
Buckingham Palace in
honour of President
John F Kennedy and
First Lady Jacqueline

↓ Below right
Meeting Pope John
XXIII at the Vatican
during a royal
tour of Italy in 1961



1960s



→
With Prime Minister
Harold Wilson,
June 1969



‘My sister has an aura. I’m enormously impressed when she walks into a room. It’s a kind of magic’

Princess Margaret

→
1 July 1969,
Caernarfon Castle:
Prince Charles
becomes
Prince of Wales





↑
The Royal family take a stroll in the grounds of Frogmore House, Windsor, in 1968

100



→

A soldier passes out while the Queen rides past during the Trooping the Colour parade in London, 1970



↓
14 April 1973: at
Badminton Horse
Trials with the
Queen Mother and
Princess Margaret

→
On board
HMY Britannia,
18 March 1972



↑
5 October 1970: at
Chequers with Prime
Minister Edward
Heath, President
Richard Nixon and
First Lady Patricia

→
Dancing with
President Gerald Ford
at the Bicentennial
celebrations of the
US Declaration of
Independence in 1976







The Silver Jubilee

More than a million people lined the streets of London to catch a glimpse of the Queen on her way to St Paul's Cathedral for a service of thanksgiving, and a further 500 million watched live television coverage of the events to celebrate her 25-year reign.



↑
7 June 1977: the Queen in the gold state coach during the Silver Jubilee procession

→ Top right
The Queen and Prince Philip during their tour of Great Britain to mark the Jubilee year



→
Silver Jubilee celebrations in Camberwell, south London, June 1977

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→
29 July 1981: on
the balcony at
Buckingham Palace
after the wedding
of Prince Charles to
Lady Diana Spencer





Visiting the set of
Coronation Street,
1 June 1982



TIM GRAHAM/GETTY IMAGES



→
14 October 1986: with Prince Philip at the Great Wall of China during their state visit to the country

←
8 June 1982: riding with President Ronald Reagan at Windsor Castle

‘She has an understanding of what other people’s lives are like and the normal human condition’

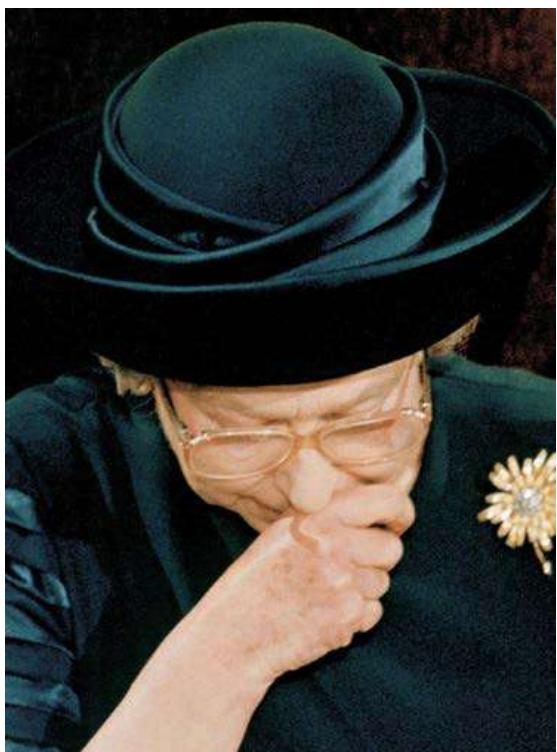
Lord Powell of Bayswater, private secretary to Margaret Thatcher



←
11 December 1985: celebrating 250 years of Downing Street as the Prime Minister’s residence with James Callaghan, Alec Douglas-Home, Margaret Thatcher, Harold Macmillan, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath



100



←
24 November 1992,
Guildhall: the Queen
gave her 'annus
horribilis' speech during
an occasion marking
the 40th anniversary
of her accession





↑
20 November 1992:
a huge fire breaks out at
Windsor Castle, causing
extensive damage





←
4 May 1994:
commemorating
D-Day at Portsmouth
Guildhall with
Presidents Mitterrand
and Clinton



←
8 October 1993: with
Diana, Princess of
Wales, at Viscount
Linley's wedding



←
20 March 1995: the
Queen and Prince Philip
with President Nelson
Mandela in Cape Town
on their historic state
visit to post-apartheid
South Africa

←
18 October 1994:
outside St Basil's
Cathedral in Moscow
with President
Boris Yeltsin, during
the first visit to
Russia by a ruling
British monarch

→
11 December 1997,
Portsmouth: the
decommissioning
ceremony for
HMY Britannia



→ Far right
5 September 1997:
viewing floral tributes
to Diana, Princess
of Wales, outside
Buckingham Palace

**'Tolerance is the essential ingredient
of any happy marriage... the Queen
has the quality in abundance'**

Prince Philip

→
Singing *Auld Lang
Syne* with Tony Blair
during millennium
celebrations, New
Year's Eve 1999





The People's Princess

Diana, Princess of Wales, died in hospital in the early hours of 31 August 1997 following a car crash in Paris, which also killed Dodi Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul. Her funeral on 6 September 1997 was watched by an estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide.

2002

→
Taken by Patrick
Lichfield at
Buckingham Palace
in November 2001
to commemorate
the Queen's
Golden Jubilee the
following year

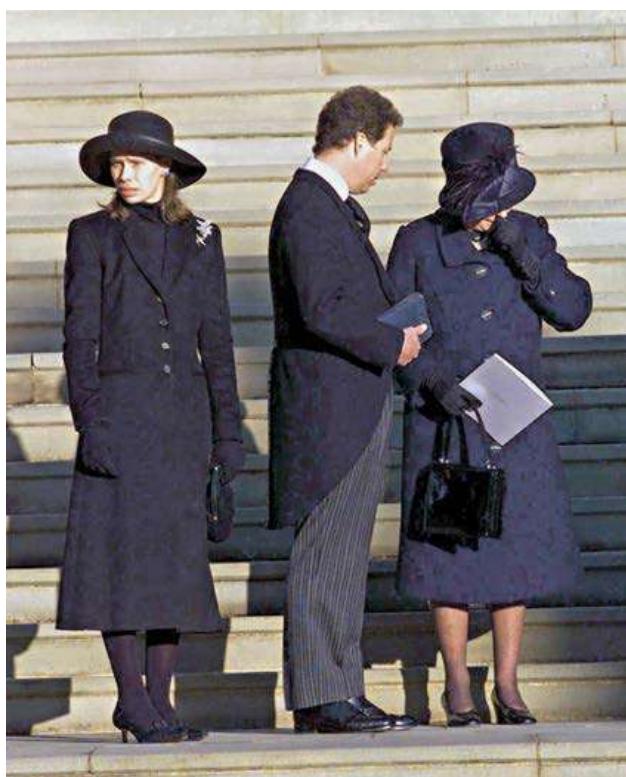




→
The Queen Mother's
100th birthday
celebrations,
August 2000



→
With her niece and
nephew Lady Sarah
Chatto and Lord Linley
at the private funeral
of their mother
Princess Margaret,
15 February 2002



Two great losses

The Queen lost her mother and sister within seven weeks of each other. Princess Margaret died on 9 February 2002, aged 71, after a stroke; and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother died in her sleep at the age of 101 on 20 March, having outlived her husband King George VI by 50 years.



4 June 2002: Golden Jubilee Service at St Paul's Cathedral



←
The Queen and Prince Harry share a smile as she inspects soldiers at their passing out parade at Sandhurst Military Academy in 2006

→
Enjoying the
Braemar Gathering,
Highland Games,
4 September 2006



↓
8 April 2005: Prince
Charles marries
Camilla Parker Bowles



↑
On the White House
balcony with President
George W Bush in
May 2007

←
State Opening
of Parliament,
December 2008



→
The Queen and the
Duke of Edinburgh are
amused by a swarm of
bees at a 2003 event at
Windsor Castle



‘She has shown the most remarkable steadfastness and fortitude, always remaining a figure of reassuring calm’

Prince Charles

ROYAL

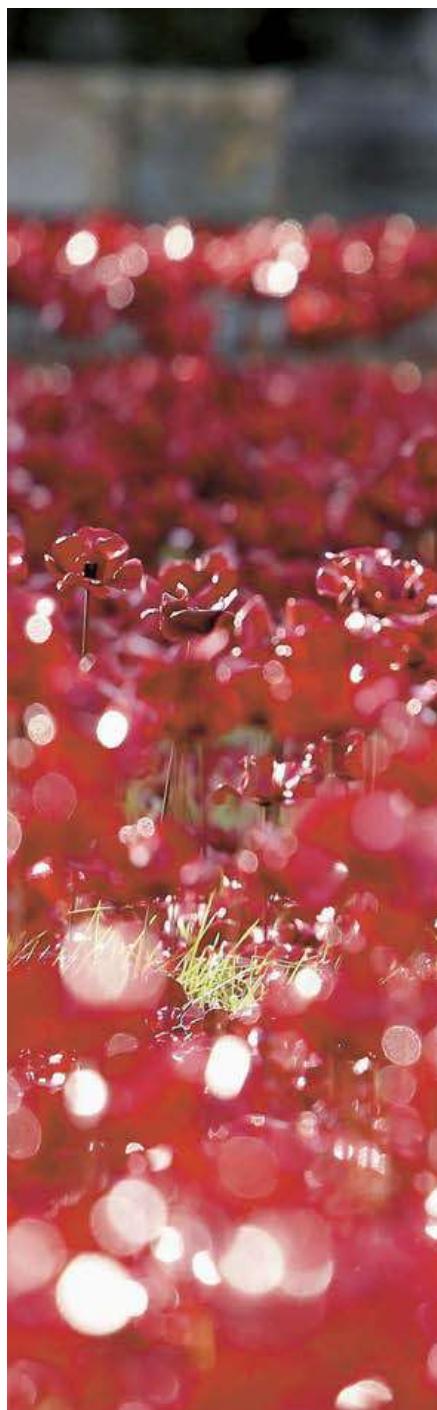


→
The wedding of
Prince William and
Kate Middleton,
29 April 2011





◀
Accompanied to the
opening ceremony
of the 2012 Olympic
Games by Daniel Craig
as James Bond



↓
23 May 2011:
with President
Barack Obama at
a state banquet at
Buckingham Palace



↑
16 October 2014:
visiting the *Blood
Swept Lands and
Seas of Red* public
art installation at the
Tower of London

'There are no set rules. She had to carve her own way, and she's done it fantastically'

Prince William

↓
23 July 2012: Diamond Jubilee lunch at Downing Street with David Cameron, John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown



↓
5 July 2015, Sandringham: Princess Charlotte's christening



→
2 June 2012: on the royal barge for the Diamond Jubilee pageant





↑
21 April 2016, Windsor:
the Queen's 90th
birthday



←
13 July 2016: Theresa
May is invited to form
a government



←
11 April 2017: feeding
Donna the elephant
at the opening of
the new Centre for
Elephant Care at
ZSL Whipsnade Zoo





19 May 2018:
Prince Harry marries
Meghan Markle



20 February 2018,
London Fashion Week:
on the front row at
Richard Quinn's show
with Anna Wintour
and royal dressmaker
Angela Kelly

19 November 2017:
the Queen and Duke of
Edinburgh's platinum
wedding anniversary





↑
8 May 2019: Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex – joined by her mother Doria Ragland – introduce Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor to his great-grandparents



5 June 2019,
Portsmouth: with
Prince Charles
and President Donald
Trump at the D-Day 75
ceremony



19 December 2019:
the State Opening
of Parliament

‘All the time William and I are so struck by the Queen’s sense of duty and commitment’

Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge

8 April 2020



→
8 April 2020, Piccadilly Circus, London: a display of quotes from the Queen's broadcast to the UK and Commonwealth regarding the coronavirus pandemic



→
9 March 2020: the
annual Commonwealth
Day service at
Westminster Abbey



→
8 May 2020, Windsor
Castle: the Queen
addresses the nation
and Commonwealth
on the 75th anniversary
of VE Day





↖ The Queen and Prince Philip at Windsor Castle, admiring a card made by their great-grandchildren Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis for their 73rd wedding anniversary on 17 November 2020



↖ 18 July 2020: the wedding of Princess Beatrice and Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi at the Royal Chapel of All Saints at Royal Lodge, Windsor



'Prince Philip is the only man in the world who treats the Queen simply as another human being'

Lord Charteris, the Queen's former private secretary

↑
17 April 2021, St George's Chapel, Windsor: the funeral of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who died on 9 April, age 99

→
18 December 2020, Windsor Castle: an event to thank local volunteers and key workers who would be helping others over Christmas





2 June 2022,
Buckingham Palace:
Prince Louis has a
memorable reaction
to the flypast during
celebrations for his
great-grandmother's
Platinum Jubilee

21 April 2022, Windsor
Castle: the Queen's
96th birthday is
marked by a new
photograph of her
holding the reins of
two white ponies



